

CHAPTER VII

LAKES IN STARKE COUNTY

The lakes of Starke County are most beautiful, nestled down so tranquil and calm, with grand nature surrounding them, with all the beautiful landscape stretching far beyond its sunny shores, where the meadowlark, the bluejay and the yellow-breasted robins abound in their pleasures upon those fine wooded shores and flower gardens of nature's richest storehouse.

BASS LAKE

There are several beautiful lakes in the county. Bass Lake, lying partly in North Bend Township and partly in California Township, is about one and one-half miles wide by three miles long and contains bass, pickerel, sunfish and pike, which makes it a great place for a summer resort. Many people come out from Chicago, Logansport, Kokomo and Huntington and other towns, spending a good share of the hot and sultry months of summer upon the shores of this beautiful lake.

There are some three hundred cottages situated along the shores, commanding a fine view of the lake. Stores, hotels, clubhouses, theaters and icehouses, as well as many residences, are situated around the lake, and a spur from the C. & E. R. R. from Bass Station runs to the lake, built perhaps chiefly on account of the Knickerbocker icehouses on the south side of the lake, but used incidentally for delivering excursionists to the lake from that railroad during the summer months.

Almost every foot of shore line has been laid out into lots, giving all a choice of their preference in locating upon the shores of this magnificent body of pure, sparkling water. The good gravel road which extends around the whole lake makes it an easy matter to get there with automobiles, a line of which runs constantly to the lake from Knox every day during the summer season.

The largest icehouses in the county are located on the south shores of Bass Lake, owned and controlled by the Knickerbocker Ice Company of Chicago. There are hundreds of tons of ice shipped from these icehouses during the winter months, and employment is given to a good many farmers who have the time during the winter to help in that line of industry.

Subaqueous springs and flowing wells are common along the east

and northeasterly shores of the lake. The greater part of the water area is very shallow, perhaps five or ten feet deep. At some points the lake will measure thirty to forty feet in depth. The northwesterly shore of the lake was a low, wet marsh, but now with little water. Now since the land has been dredged, the water surface of the lake is considerable smaller than when first surveyed in 1834.

This lake is situated about fourteen feet above the Tippecanoe River, which runs about six miles south. It has an artificial or dredge ditch for its outlet, which was one of the first ditches of any size constructed in the county, and of course has been deepened and widened since it was first constructed.

The bottom of the lake, for the most part, is a sandy bottom. In the western part are said to be muck deposits which contain a luxuriant growth of vegetation. The lakes of Starke County were a thing most wonderfully appreciated by the Indians, as evidences exist of a general camp life carried on upon the shores of all the lakes in the county.

A fish hatchery is also established on the eastern shores of the lake, the purpose of which is to supply the lake with bass, making it one of the best lakes for bass fishing in the state. This hatchery was established by the Government in the year of 1913, and is the only one in the county. The main object is to stock this lake exclusively with bass, and the Government is working to that end. A company of men are employed each year to seine the lake and sort out all the fish and dispose of them, except the bass, which are returned to the lake. The fish hatchery indicates what interest the Government is taking in this beautiful, silent and pacific lake of Starke County.

A comparison of some of the lakes in Northern Indiana shows Bass Lake to rank as the fourth in area and depth, being about three square miles of water surface and an average depth of 30.5 feet. As long as time shall last and those lakes continue to exist, they will be the pleasure and pride of our people. Changes may come and go, but as long as the lakes exist so long will they be loved and traversed from shore to shore.

In origin these lakes were formed by the glaciers, no doubt, being a part and parcel of the hills and sand-ridges characteristic of the moraines of receding ice. We have the Kettle lakes, the Channel lakes and the Irregular lakes, all of which are classed according to their shape and character and are known as morainic lakes. Bass Lake especially is a sample of those lakes and belongs to that class and division of such beautiful bodies of water found in the county.

Gasoline launches as well as sailboats and usually two or three steamboats, all plying upon the broad and tranquil bosom of the lake of lakes (Bass Lake) give entertainment to many visitors who take pleasure in sailing or boat riding upon this beautiful body of water. No lake in Northern Indiana is better known and more noted for fish than this.

This lake is situated on top of an elevated plain, and, strange as it may seem, the drainage for the most part is all from the body of the

lake. The fall from the water level of the lake to the Tippecanoe River, six miles to the south, is about fourteen feet.

Thus the waters could be materially reduced if it was sufficiently ditched, but this would be a great damage to the community, as the very existence of that lake gives to the surrounding country an important source of pleasure and profit.

Some of the first settlers located on the shores of this lake, and while the oldest citizens have passed beyond, yet there are those who can well remember the cold and bleak days of a hard and ruthless struggle for the necessities of life. But they mastered the situation and those living are here to take advantage of the beautiful situation around that never fading and beautiful body of pure water.

It is the pride and pleasure of older citizens to sit and talk of the years gone by when they would chase the deer upon the broad stretch of this ice and snow-covered lake and capture them and dress them for venison. Also they would cut holes in the ice and bring from the lake some of the finest fish to be found anywhere. This was one of the ways the early settlers had of making their living. Contented and never complaining, at the same time they realized the many comforts and pleasures experienced by those in better circumstances than they could enjoy.

It was the brave heart and untiring efforts of those people that brought them through all those hardships and placed them upon a more easy plane of prosperity and contentment. They looked back to the years of their first settlement in the neighborhood and on the shores of Bass Lake with a heart too full for utterance.

KOONTZ LAKE

Koontz Lake is in the northeastern part of the county and contains between two hundred and three hundred acres, is mostly a shallow body of water. This lake was increased in size by the building of the dam at Koontz' Mill in 1848, and was known originally as Woodworth's Lake.

It is getting to be quite a summer resort. Tracts of land on the shore line have been laid out into lots which are being bought up and buildings being built for those who come to that beautiful lake to fish and while away these hot, sultry days upon its shaded shores.

With Kaney's Addition on the north shore, called Kaney North Shore Subdivision to Koontz Lake, Anderson's Subdivision to Koontz Lake and Koontz Subdivision to Koontz Lake, there is ample space for cottages, as well as other buildings around this very inviting lake for all who wish to enjoy the same. Good gravel roads around the lake add materially to the comfort of the traveling public.

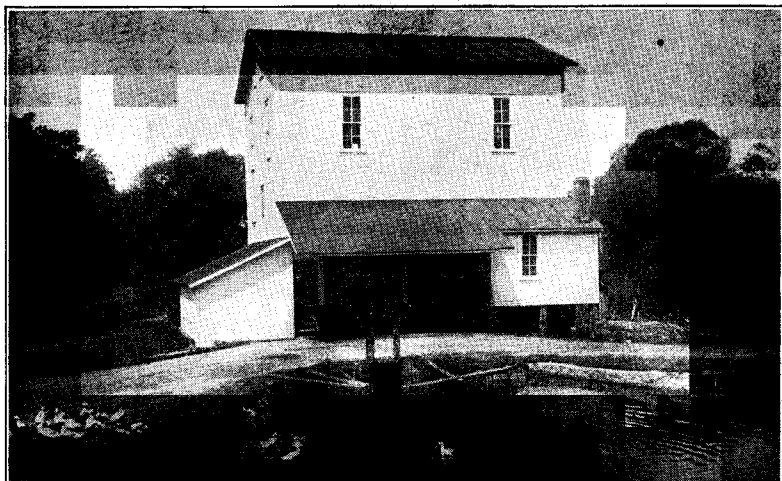
It was upon the western shores of this lake that the first grist mill was built in Starke County in 1848. After being burned down a few years ago, it was rebuilt on the same spot and continues to run under the same management as of several years ago. It has been a great

benefit to all the people of Oregon Township in getting their grain ground so near home. The present owner and manager, Samuel Koontz, is a son of Samuel Koontz, who was the owner and manager of the original Koontz mill.



SCENE ON KOONTZ LAKE

Many people are coming to this lake, now becoming noted for its pleasures and comforts. The citizens that live upon its shores are doing all they can to make Koontz Lake rank with any of the pleasure resorts in the north end of the state.



THE KOONTZ MILL

Situated only three miles from Walkerton but in Starke County, it has a great advantage over some lakes, as there are several railroads in Walkerton, which afford all pleasure seekers a chance to visit this lake from all the ends of the country. It is also only three miles from

Grovertown, a small town on the Pittsburg, Ft. Wayne & Chicago Railroad, which too brings excursionists from Chicago to the fine and placid waters of Koontz Lake, where they can enjoy themselves in boat riding and fishing day after day during the hot summer months.

ROUND LAKE

Round Lake, lying in the west half of section 8 in California Township, comes in too for its share of patronage by people who desire a good day of fishing in that fine little body of water.

This lake when the Government surveyors surveyed this county was known as Silver Lake, but was afterward changed to Round Lake. It has good banks on the north and easterly side and is surrounded by fine farms and good neighbors.

Some of the finest fish is caught in this lake, and there are those who go there every year for a fishing trip or to enjoy themselves in boat riding. There in nature's boundless beauties surrounding the shores of this lake the wild Indians used to have full control away back in the '30s and '40s, when the white man just began to break in on their hunting grounds. There the Indian fished and trapped for years, in their little bark canoes, not dreaming of the approach of the white man. Yet he came and then the red man gave up his hunting ground and this beautiful lake and went farther west to look for new hunting grounds, only to be shoved on farther and farther to the west by the continual approach of the white man.

Ducks and geese and other fowls were a common thing upon the bosom of this silver-hued and sparkling lake, so characteristic of the first name it bore. The farmers, too, after coming into full possession spent many hours of pleasure, fishing in its waters and hunting upon its shores; but they too have given up this course and spend their time in more profitable pursuits. A number of farm dwellings are situated upon its shores, where the farmer can sit in his home and view the lake from shore to shore.

The area of this lake is about one hundred acres and is located about five and one-half miles southwest of Knox. The water is quite deep except in the easterly part.

EAGLE LAKE

Eagle Lake lies in Washington Township, about one-half mile west of the east line of Starke County. Originally it had about one hundred acres, but since the Walker dredge ditch has been constructed, which crosses the lake from east to west, it has become reduced almost one-half by reason of this drainage. No doubt but what this lake will become, as old Manitou, a thing of the past, as it was a very shallow lake in the first place. This lake is surrounded by a sandy upland of groves of timber and cultivated farm lands. The Walker dredge ditch passes along and down Eagle Creek, which was its original outlet, in a westerly

course, emptying into Yellow River about one mile east of Knox. Hence the same lands covered by this body of water will in time become farm lands, or a greater portion of it, as indications show at this time.

This lake, like all the rest, was a camp ground for the Indians ere the white man took possession of this part of the country. Hunting and fishing was their chief employment. At their campfires war dances were the main attractions of night, when they would light up their camps and make the surrounding forest ring with their war-whoops.

A part of Tecumseh's tribe, backing up from the scenes of battle with General Harrison in 1811, found within the Kankakee and Calumet valleys those beautiful lakes of pure, fresh, sparkling water, and at Eagle Lake they pitched their tents, a place where they could rest in peace and be sole possessor of the surrounding country around this lake.

The old camp grounds where they held control at that time have long since passed into the hands of the white man, where he now holds dominion over the old Indian hunting grounds and now cultivates the soil that surrounds this lake, undisturbed by the Indian war-whoop and the tomahawk.

What would we do today if the same conditions existed that did with the first settlers of the county, with Indians hugging the shores of this lake, eking out a meager existence, with their huts and tents there during the cold winter months? It was certainly a lonesome and forlorn life to live, even if it was the life of the red man, who had to endure that kind of living.

This lake is surrounded by beautiful groves of oak timber, where the birds build their nests and the owl may screech, where the whippoorwill can be heard, and ducks and other water fowls delight in the waters.

SMALLER LAKES

There are a number of smaller lakes of little importance, as English Lake (nearly extinct), Hartz Lake and Rothermal Lake, in the south-eastern part of the county, and Black Lake in section 25, North Bend Township, which, too, has been ditched and has become of little importance as a lake.

In an early day we could name a number of small lakes which have become entirely extinct and the same land, once covered by water, is now fine farm land. The lakes of the county have been a part and parcel of the great pleasures of the citizens from the earliest days of its first settlement to the present time. Boat riding and fishing have occupied the attention of all who delight in that kind of sport and pastime.

The migratory birds would come and go with the seasons, but the Indians that caught the fur and trapped the game while living upon the shores of those beautiful lakes, left those bodies of water only when driven from the county by the white man. Then the new white citizen took up the duties that were so long performed by the red man and hunted and trapped and fished where the Indians hunted and fished so

long ago. Many of the islands bordering upon the lakes and rivers have left their marks of the Indian camping grounds, now occupied by new and more useful improvements.

Never since the Indians camped upon the sun-bathed shores of those lakes has there been the same camp life experienced as when the red man occupied this neighborhood. Some of the first settlers, speaking of the Indians, have said they could hear the Indian war-whoop and their carousals for miles on a clear, still night. Why should not the Indians have enjoyed themselves when there was no one to hinder or molest them before the white man came?

Those Indians were perhaps some of the same tribe that occupied the Kankakee Valley long after the tribe had sold their lands in the northwestern part of Indiana, after they signed a treaty in the year 1832. They scattered over the Calumet and Kankakee region, some remaining for years, but finally became discouraged by the white settlers in the '50s and abandoned their camping grounds and bade farewell to this part of the state. Many marks of an eventful camp life were left behind by the savages who hunted the deer, the wolf and the wild game upon the lands surrounding these lakes and fished and trapped the wild ducks and geese so bountiful in those days. What a great change has taken place in this county since that time!